



**Testimony on Early Childhood Funding
Concerning the Governor's Proposed Budget
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My name is Barbara Garvin-Kester and I am a child advocate and consultant and the former Director of Childcare Learning Centers (CLC) in Stamford, CT, an organization that provides affordable, comprehensive early childhood education and care to nearly 1000 children and their caregivers in Fairfield County.

The Governor's proposed budget for early childhood is one that is great for kids because it legislates the creation and funding for a much needed Office of Early Childhood. This budget will help Connecticut coordinate and implement new and existing early childhood programs and ensure all children have the opportunity to succeed in school and life. We know from years of research that these early education programs are essential to lifting children and families out of poverty and reducing the longer term costs to our communities of remediation, homelessness, risky teenage behavior, joblessness, and incarceration.

As an experienced leader of education reform, I know first hand the challenges of providing universal pre-k education in our state. Funding for these programs has actually decreased while mandates for higher quality teachers, staff, programs, and facilities have increased dramatically. Rate increases are long overdue and are essential to maintaining and improving quality.

Funding must also be more flexible to achieve our Governor's goal of universal pre-k. As a partner with the local public schools, CLC knows there are between 100 and 300 families in our community who still do not have access to affordable early childhood programs. Childcare Learning Centers worked for years to acquire the necessary funds to expand our available space at one of our key campuses. The organization now has the physical capacity to serve at least 60 more children and we are asking our legislators to increase state funding at the proposed new rates for 1020 new preschool spaces to support opportunities like these in all of our suburban and rural communities.

Imagine a world where all children in our state can achieve success in life!
Please support the Governor's proposed budget for early childhood.